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THE NEW YORK TIMES
18 DECEMBER 1982

3 Wanted by Italy in Shooting of Pope Meet With Press in Bulgaria

SOFIA, Bulgaria, Dec. 17 (AP) — Bulgarian authorities presented three people at a news conference today who are wanted in Italy in connection with the shooting of Pope John Paul II. All three denied any involvement in the attack.

At the news conference, Boyan Traikov, head of the official press agency, B.T.A., and a member of the Communist Party Central Committee, read a message from the prosecutor general inviting the Italian magistrate who is heading the investigation to come to Sofia and question the two Bulgarians and a Turkish national.

Mr. Traikov gave no definite answer on whether the three would be extradited to Italy. He said the Bulgarians would go to Rome only under "guarantees which would secure the Bulgarian citizen his civil rights."

"There is a procedure to be followed," he said. Bulgaria and Italy have no extradition treaty.

In Rome, the telephones at the home and office of the Italian magistrate, Ilario Martella, went unanswered today when reporters called. A Justice Ministry spokesman, Alfredo Vinciguerra, said there had been no formal invitation for Mr. Martella to go to Sofia but added he was free to go if he wished.

No Official Italian Comment

During the three-and-a-half-hour news conference, reporters questioned Todor Aivazov and Maj. Zhelyo Vasilev, former employees of the Bulgarian Embassy in Rome, and Bekir Celenk, a Turk wanted in his homeland on charges of drug smuggling and arms running.

Also present was Rosica Antonov, the wife of Sergei Ivanov Antonov, the Rome chief for the Bulgarian national airline who was arrested in Rome on charges of complicity in the May 13, 1981 shooting of the Pope.

Italian arrest warrants have been issued for Mr. Celenk and Mr. Vasilev, a former secretary to the Bulgarian military attaché in Rome. Mr. Aivazov, an embassy cashier in Rome, was transferred back to Sofia after the Italians asked that his diplomatic immunity be lifted.

Italian authorities have not officially commented on press reports charging that Mr. Aivazov and Mr. Vasilev were involved with the Bulgarian secret police in a plot to kill the Pope, who was shot by Mehmet Ali Agca, a convicted Turkish killer. Other reports have also charged that Mr. Celenk offered Mr. Agca \$1.2 million to kill the Pope.

The Sofia Government has denied any involvement in the shooting, and Mr. Traikov said today that the press reports and Italian warrants were part of a United States-inspired slander campaign.

"I have nothing to do with the crime committed against the Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church," Mr. Aivazov told reporters. Mr. Vasilev, who appeared in his uniform, made a similar statement but few other comments.

Mr. Celenk, who is described as being under "Government control," was flanked by two uniformed police officers.

He called himself an "honest businessman" dealing in fruits and vegetables, and said, "Agca mentioned my name, certainly. But this crazy talk can only be believed by those who are fools."

Asserting that he did not know Mr. Agca, Mr. Celenk said he was in Sofia in July 1980 when Mr. Agca reportedly also was here. He insisted there was no significance to the timing.

"I've been on many occasions to Bulgaria," he said. "I have been to the United States and Japan as well. If I had any connection with him, I could have met him anywhere."

Mr. Traikov read a letter he said was written by Mr. Antonov, which said, "I am convinced that I am groundlessly charged with absurd allegations."

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